

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

SOCIOLOGY

I. SCOPE

Sociology is defined by the American Sociological Association as “the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior.” Although the term “sociology” was not in general use until the mid-nineteenth century, its roots are grounded in the writings of early philosophers and observers of human nature. Sociology as a separate discipline developed throughout the nineteenth century, and by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, departments of sociology were established in universities in the United States and Europe. The collections of the Library of Congress include the works of the foundational figures of sociology, and the sociology collection has continued to grow and is an area of great strength within the Library’s general collections.

The Library of Congress classification system places sociology in subclasses **HM-HX** of class **H** (Social Sciences). In broad terms, subclass **HM** covers general and theoretical sociology; **HN**, social history and conditions and social problems and reform; **HQ**, marriage and the family, sexual life, age groups, and women’s studies; **HS**, secret and other societies and clubs; **HT**, urban and rural sociology, social classes (including slavery), and race and race relations in general; **HV**, social work and public welfare, social pathologies (including drug abuse, crime and criminology, and terrorism), and criminal justice administration; and **HX**, socialism and communism (general), utopias, and anarchism. As much sociological research and methodology are interdisciplinary, a significant part of subclass H, which covers social sciences in general, is sociological in nature. Large numbers of sociology titles are found in the subject bibliography section of Class Z: in Z 7161-7165 (political and social sciences) and in Z 5703 (criminology).

Specialties within the discipline of sociology may relate to other subjects and are thus found in other parts of the classification schedules. For example, the sociology of religion classes in BL; medical sociology in RA; educational sociology in LC; and military sociology in U. Other disciplines and classes such as psychology (BF), anthropology (GN), statistics (HA), demography (HB), and communication, mass media, and sociolinguistics (P) include closely related materials.

See also the Collections Policy Statement for Sociology.

II. SIZE

For the sociology collections, the best available (but incomplete) figure comes from the ILS Report done in October 2007. The total figure for subclasses **HM-HX** is 426,656 titles (not number of volumes) in the general collections only. Serial titles cataloged after 2000 are not included in this number. Because the ILS reports are based on the classified collections, sociological materials in microform, electronic and other non-book formats are also excluded.

III. GENERAL RESEARCH STRENGTHS

The sheer size and historical nature of the General Collections mean that the Library has great strength in all areas of sociology: both general and theoretical sociology and specific subfields, both academic and popular sociology, and both current and historical materials. The sociology collections support research at the most advanced level.

In addition to the classified book collections, almost every special collection in the Library holds material that is of sociological interest or that could be studied from a sociological perspective. Some of this material documents social issues and social movements. The Microform Reading Room (Humanities and Social Sciences Division) in particular has strong holdings in sociology, primarily of thematic collections, and to a lesser extent, of individual serial and monographic titles. The collection of doctoral dissertations includes thousands of titles which reflect trends in all areas of sociological research. Important thematic collections in microformat focus on sociological topics and issues such as public opinion polls, social surveys, social welfare, terrorism, and church and social problems. Examples of relevant collections in other divisions are the Farm Security Administration photographs (Prints and Photographs Division), and the records of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency (Manuscript Division). The Manuscript Division holds many collections relating to American social movements and social history and is the repository for the papers of sociologist Robert Nisbet.

IV. AREAS OF DISTINCTION

Given its long history, comprehensive collection development policies, and impact of copyright deposit, the Library has arguably the top-ranked collection of historical and current titles for sociology. For all periods, the sociology collections are strongest for titles published within and about the United States. The Library's collection of foreign titles is outstanding, but it does not equal the national collection. In general, the holdings of U.S. government publications in subclasses HQ, HT, and HV are notable. The sociology collection also provides excellent documentation for the early history of social research programs in the United States and Europe. The unique collections in the Manuscript Division and Prints and Photographs Division mentioned above are certainly areas of distinction.

V. ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

For sociology (as for all disciplines), this is an increasingly important and quickly changing area as more information migrates to electronic format. The Library's own Digital Collections include many collections relating to sociology, social history, and social issues. American Memory, Chronicling America, Global Gateway, THOMAS, and LC Web Archives both enrich and fill in gaps in the traditional print collections. One example from LC Web Archives is *Crisis in Darfur, Sudan, Web Archive, 2006*, which

supplements books on refugees in Sudan classed in HV. The links to sociology in Global Gateway are useful not only for the resulting electronic text but for identification of traditional publications (which may or may not be in the Library's collections). THOMAS is essential for sociologists who are researching social policy. Many other examples could be cited.

A small but growing number of e-books and e-journals on sociology are available. *Oxford Reference Online: Social Sciences* and *Credo Reference: Social Sciences* are two of the Library's subscription databases that include some titles on sociology. For serials, *E-Journals in Social Science*, *Social Sciences Full-Text*, and *Emerald* (a problematic resource) are subscriptions with some coverage of sociology. The Library subscribes to other databases that are not full-text but that are major indexing and abstracting resources for sociology: *Sociological Abstracts*, *Social Services Abstracts*, *Social Sciences Citation Index*, *Polling the Nations*, *Humanities and Social Sciences Retrospective*, and others. For some databases coverage has changed over time, and some vendors are more reliable than others.

There are, of course, many freely available electronic resources of interest to sociologists; a few examples from Databases & E-Resources at the Library of Congress and the Main Reading Room's Alcove 9 are: *AgeLine Database*, *MIPT Terrorism Information Center*, *Migration Information Source*, *ReliefWeb*, and *SocioSite*. For sociological research today, the web sites of government agencies and of public policy and advocacy organizations are important sources of statistics and other information on many social issues and often provide full-text access to documents and current research reports.

VI. WEAKNESSES/EXCLUSIONS

In spite of the great overall strength of the sociology collections, there are some weaknesses and exclusions. Problems exist in identifying and acquiring titles published by small and alternative presses and proceedings of conferences and seminars, especially regional ones. This is an even more difficult issue with foreign titles. In general, the Library's holdings of foreign titles in sociology are not as comprehensive as U.S. holdings. This is especially true of foreign serial titles, and budget restrictions over the years have had serious impact in this category.

The Library does not collect data sets (e.g., electronic data from surveys, longitudinal studies, censuses and other demographic studies, etc.), which are vital for much sociological research. This is a complex issue and is of significance for other disciplines. Access to some data sets is restricted or is fee-based, but others are publicly available. Increasingly, data sets created by U.S. government agencies are available for public use. The American Sociological Association also posts on its web site a listing of large-scale data sets with public access.

Except for the papers of Robert Nisbet, the Library does not hold collections of papers of prominent sociologists. Such papers are usually deposited with the academic institutions where the sociologist had research and teaching affiliations.